/626 cont./

182 means to deny the historically demonstrated connection of the basic factors of certain types of economy, for the latter do actually exist and around them are entwined the locally conditioned separate structures. In the total picture of general cultural events within human society, the external conduct of life of our Yamana deserves a particular, even a favored place, inasmuch as it has maintained itself from its earliest beginnings up to the time of European intervention cut off from outside influences by practically impenetrable natural barriers. /Fig. 76 appears here./

/627/ Part 3

Social Organization and Tribal Custom

The external form of life of the Yamana is that of an acquisitive gathering-economy closely dependent on given natural conditions. Just as the environment decisively influences the total economy, determining its form, so does this form of economy very definitely determine the specific social organization. The latter, in turn, rests on the independence of each individual family, with its special capacities and social performances. "The kind of subsistence which predominates in a social group, the form of their production which is not arbitrarily chosen but determined by certain conditions of life, directly or indirectly shapes all other ideas and actions of that society. If we know what a people eats, we also know what it is" (Grosse:25). This dependence of the social organization upon the form of economy, which has been proved among other primitive peoples, is also very definitely true of the Fuegians, especially of our Yamana.

● 594 The invariable obligation of a nomadic people to gather food without pause excludes a stratified organization of the whole society. Its sole supporting pillar is the individual family. In the form of a monogamous single marriage, the family appears as the universal, narrowly circumscribed, definitely determined social structure. Not only is it bounded by strong safeguards, but even from the start, as soon as a marriage is planned, certain conditions which guarantee its permanence and its natural function

[Text continues on page 386.-Analyst]

/627 cont./

594 must be fulfilled. We refer, first of all, to the regulations and customs that apply to a marriage contract. The important position of the woman in the economy assures her position within the family equal to that of the man. It is the strict social duty of every individual family, apart from any purely natural compulsion, to rear the children according to the prevailing principles and the established social aims. Beyond that, as a continuation and supplement of family rearing, the tribe or group also offers the young people at the time of maturity a community education in the youth initiation. There are many good reasons why this ceremony /628/ should be discussed in this section, although it is derived from the realm of religious ideas. In nothing else among the Yamana does the primitive state manifest itself so clearly as in the youth initiation, and it functions beyond the narrow legal boundaries of the family, exercising its own rights.

571 Several families are naturally associated through blood ties, but only loosely, and the reciprocal obligations growing out of this are the kind universally found among human beings. Five dialect groups have been established as associations of larger proportions, but these cannot be regarded as a division based on social principles (p. 199 /untranslated/). Moreover, there is no hierarchy based on birth and station, nor are there class differences which elsewhere rest on accomplishments or property. Finally, unification of the entire tribal community under a single head, such as a chief or magistrate, priest or sorcerer, did not take place among our Indians.

671 There are ancient tribal customs with the force of legal obligations, as well as definite principles about possessions and property, and the public sees to it that they are faithfully followed. It also observes and practices the cultivation of the universally familiar tribal virtues. Crimes against the assured duration of the family or against related groups are settled in smaller or larger combats. Although there is no special social division and no appointment of an authoritative person to rule the community, there is a distinct and binding power embracing all members of the tribe -- namely, the state, no matter how weak and undefined it still appears in its earliest beginnings.

/628 cont./

181 The entire social order, as the aggregate of conjugal or familial arrangements and vital functions of the tribe or community, proves to be naturally humane and, therefore, appears in an altogether friendly, pleasant light.

A. Courtship and Marriage

●594 The individual family, the supporting pillar of the entire social order, is regulated in its origin and its continuation according to fixed, unchangeable fundamental principles. These principles are kept alive as customs in the consciousness and conscience of the people. They are made known to each member of the tribe and are more or less familiar to him. Since custom and practice are the primary law in the performance of duty, the centuries have not eaten away any of this, and whatever has remained down to the present time is to be justly and lawfully regarded as ancient tribal heritage.

581 The individual family consisting of parents and children is
/629/ basically independent and a compact union. It is founded
594 on mutual affection between the two lovers and the desire for life-long union. It is held together by the increasing spiritual relationship of the two partners. Its vitality is assured by the fellowship of work and possessions, food gathering and consumption. It grows beyond itself by the self-evident duty of parents to beget several children and through them to insure the permanence of the tribe.

581 Although these vital customs pertaining to the institution of
177 the family have endured in century-long uniformity, foreign influences have exerted such pressure on it for several decades that this firm structure has finally become undermined. Conditions have arisen in recent times which cannot be regarded as natural, and their effects on marital conditions have created a sad caricature of the original pattern of marriage. These regrettable changes and the false and inadequate observations of most travelers since the middle of the previous century do not give a picture of the basic organization of the institution of the family among the Yamana (1).

583 1. What has been recorded from still older
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/693 cont./

182 Primitive people in such an unfavorable environment as that around Cape Horn cannot deviate very much from the norms of life imposed by nature if they are to survive as a people. Actually the marital arrangements of our Fuegians, including polygamy which is occasionally permitted and the obligation to marry widows, strike one as quite self-explanatory and natural, hence also as homely and appealing. Bridges' opinion after decades of experience as a missionary carries greater weight than other judgments, and he (i):21 summarized it in the following very terse, but truly comprehensive words: "On the whole, the family life was happy and correct" /cited in English/.

B. Parents and Child

•694 The nature of the economy, which is the only kind possible in the Cape Horn region, forces our Fuegians to split up into individual families, each one devoting itself independently to the quest for food. Hence, day after day, the parents and their children are dependent on their own resources. Although the daily work of the Yamana family is more diversified than that of the neighboring Selk'nam, a great deal of unavoidable monotony is connected with it. It is of inestimable spiritual value, as well as almost an indispensable necessity, for every family to have several children, who not only form a tie that unites the two parents, but also contribute a great deal to their mental enrichment and spiritual stimulation. No wonder that the longing for a child is so strong that a couple cannot live, so to speak, without it, and that the care and treatment of the child reveal a love that cannot be intensified. Even in their parental happiness, however, adults do not let themselves be blinded or diverted from the strict duty of a firm upbringing that one must describe not only as good, but even as stern. All parents, with the exception of a few who have defective personal tendencies, devote themselves conscientiously to this upbringing to the best of their abilities and with a view to the child's welfare.

861 Profound observation and careful research have brought to light principles and techniques which put their efforts at child

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C. Kinship and Tribal Society

182 Among peoples on the low cultural level of our Yamana it is easy to observe the close reciprocal relationship between the nature of the economy and the social order. No one will regard the one as caused solely by the other, nor may one summarily deny a certain inner connection between the two.

The total number of this Fuegian tribe is low, and there is nothing to indicate that it has been noticeably higher at any time during its long presence in the Cape Horn region (p. 227 /untranslated/). This fact alone permits only one interpretation, that a complex social order, according to the various points of view from which one judges and evaluates social structures, is not to be expected here, particularly since a compact social life in one place involving all the members of the tribe is completely lacking. What our natives acquire in the way of subsistence is certainly sufficient; they do not die of hunger, and can even eat their fill. An excess of any part of their limited assets, however, is impossible. They are dependent on an imperfect form of production; hence, they can neither become numerous nor unite in a compact social life. The population is limited, so to speak, by the available food supply, and since this is sparsely distributed over a wide area, a permanent association of all tribal members in one place or in a few specific places is impossible.

594 621 The entire tribe seems torn asunder into very small individual groups, each of whom lives widely separated from any of the others and enjoys complete independence. These groups cannot be subdivided into still lower units. They are the individual families. Each family, as such, forms an independent economic unit which is isolated as a distinct community and pursues its own goal in life. Lothrop (1):160 says briefly and definitely: "Yahgan society was based on the family. There was no higher unit" /cited in English/.

602 571 Closer and more remote degrees of kinship spread out around the individual family as around a point of crystallization, and the consciousness of belonging together is more pronounced the closer the blood tie is. The more distant the individual families are as kinsmen, the more tenuous their mutual relations. This /778/ is the basis for the limited association and wide dispersion of all

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619 554 Basically one tribal member is equal to every other socially and enjoys complete independence. All of them have about the same number of objects, little though this is, and there are no differences in property and economic pursuits which elsewhere sometimes cause very disparate social levels (211). In general,

> 211. This means, as Hyades (p):335 expresses himself: "There is no king, chieftain, aristocracy, castes, social hierarchy, or slaves; it is a regime of equality in the purest sense" /translated from French/.

therefore, every adult has the same rights within his tribe, and along with this they all have some duties. No one is specifically raised above the legal equality of the multitude by special privileges; they recognize neither one nor several headmen. One person or another may acquire a certain morally superior position within the narrow circle of relatives and acquaintances /779/ through richer experience after a long life and moral rectitude. His superiority, however, is solely a matter of personality and is neither precisely defined nor founded on objective legal norms.

[197] A division of the whole tribe into so-called dialect groups has occurred under the pressure of local conditions. It is purely external. The slight differences resulting from it are in line with the unavoidable pursuit of a livelihood by each independent group. The social order in which degrees of rank are unknown is just as simple as the economic structure (212).

> 212. The basic ideas of this section have already been published by Koppers (c):155.

a. Kinship

● 594 602 Yamana social organization rests on individual families (213).

> 213. Spegazzini (a):165 gives this fact in another form: "The family constitutes all their society" /translated from Spanish/.

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•594 602 The interpretation which he adds is very mistaken: "And the man lives without pleasure, but also without great sorrow, among his wives and his children" /translated from Spanish/.

These families associate with each other more or less closely according to the closeness of their kinship ties. Consanguinity is the basis of kin-group unity, even though it spreads out in far-flung ramifications. Persons with the same blood form neither a strictly defined group nor a definite social stratum in a unique position with their own rights.

602 Among the closest relatives, however, certain obligations accrue out of their solidarity. These obligations are also part of the larger sphere of general social obligations, but they are more strongly emphasized for kinsmen. Conversely, the latter may count on special mutual aid as a sort of compensation. Kinsmen in the stricter sense of the word do not as such dispose of any kind of common property shared equally by all, nor are they guided by any unusual special regulations.

1. The Individual Family

594 In this context, as in other parts of the present book, the designation "individual family" always means only the small group made up of parents and children. Thus understood, the individual family is the kin group in the strictest sense of the word. Earlier travelers either failed to call attention to the family's natural and lawfully upheld position among the Yamana people as a whole or they only mentioned it. The navigators of earlier times recognized the occupants of one and the same canoe as a tightly knit group, but they were often mistaken in their judgment about individual persons, regarding as a man's wives two /780/ or more women who usually only by chance were in the same canoe with him. Subsequently it was chiefly the missionaries who opened their eyes to the actual independence and economic position of the individual family. Nevertheless, most travelers of the last few

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centuries did not grasp the significance of all this for a basic interpretation of Fuegian social organization, and only a few, for example, Lothrop (b):160, recognized the uniqueness of the individual family as it actually exists.

The individual family is the sole source of the vitality and the economic accomplishment of the entire people. This characterization expresses the fact that its significance could not be greater. The family's primary and basic obligation, which nature herself has imposed upon it, is fulfilled through all that the family is to the child and offers to him. This is by no means all; beyond that it also works specifically for society as a whole. For our natives, "the family constitutes all their society" /translated from Spanish/, as Spegazzini (a):165 expresses himself. It constitutes a living and working community of all its tightly knit members; the individual does not live for himself, but for his family.

This legal standing is evident in the fact that everything that serves the family and keeps it alive is available as the common possession of all members of the family. The hut and the canoe, in which everyone has his place, belong to all of them together. The one hut and the one canoe, with the single hearth fire, are symbolic of the lawful unity of all those who form this small group. It is isolated and depends upon itself alone. Its own law governs it, and no outsider may presume to tamper with this law. Stirling clearly understood its independence and self-government: "Each family -- each canoe, it might be almost said -- represents an independent authority, and carries in it, not the rudiments merely, and not the symbols, but the most complete form of government known among the fisher Indians of Tierra del Fuego" /cited in English/ (MM:IV, 34;1870).

Other persons, whether they are related closely or more distantly, do not belong to this compact unit representing the individual family. In every hut only the parents and their own children have their rightful places; all other persons are regarded as occasional guests. The latter have no right to make any kind of demand on their hosts; they are remarkably modest in their requests for help and support, even when they are in urgent need. When a grown child marries, he voluntarily relinquishes his direct connection with his hitherto close family unit and forms a new one which thereafter likewise exists in complete independence. An

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brought on at once a native jealousy and dislike. The office, therefore, was not popular, and generally destitute of authority, and fulfilled with laxity of purpose" /cited in English/. The natural inclination of these Indians is such that "they cannot bear to be dictated to" /cited in English/, as Bridges (VP:XIII, 209; 1866 tersely and definitely expresses himself.

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In spite of the far-reaching independence and freedom that each individual enjoys, the conduct of affairs in this Fuegian group is orderly and peaceful, although there are neither lawfully appointed persons of authority nor written statutes. The community life of all fellow-tribesmen is so secure that they can pursue their food-gathering unmolested and devote themselves undisturbed to their family life, to their own happiness, and to the welfare of all. Every true Yamana carries in his heart the one important law which was indelibly impressed upon him during the youth initiation and which constitutes the unwavering rule of conduct throughout life: to be a good and useful member of the tribe!

D. Youth Initiation

● 594

The Yamana are fully aware of their natural duty to educate the growing generation. Parents above all make an effort for their own children and do this with a seriousness not shown by many other peoples. The offspring is taken care of from its earliest childhood (p. 484). While it is growing up, the father's influence on the boy and the mother's on the girl gradually take on more specific forms and more definite goals. The adults /806/ make it possible for young people to achieve practical competence and a certain measure of skills, but also, beyond that, spiritual enrichment and a mental attitude toward the ideal of a perfect Yamana who can serve as a model (p. 552). The parental task is to rear their own children to a certain level of moral and practical development at maturity.

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As though the society were not satisfied with these achievements in training, which without doubt are attained in all families,

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
S386 Yahgan S386

FISH-NET

227 At certain seasons of the year Beagle channel is infested by small sardine-like fish which the Yahgan captured in dip-nets (*chimwaik*) woven of grass. A rather poorly-made example of these is shown in fig. 89. It will be noted that there is a light wooden frame enclosed by parallel strands of grass tied to the members of the frame. This was lashed to the end of a pole and with it the fish were dipped out. A model of this implement appears in the bow of the canoe in fig. 73.

FIG. 89.—Yahgan dip-net. Height, 12 in. (34/2321)

FISH-WEIRS

According to Hyades (1891, p. 372) the Yahgan sometimes erected a row of stakes. Of these I saw no trace in Tierra del Fuego.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

594 484 Yahgan society was based on the family. There was no higher unit. However, related families usually paddled their canoes in couples, as the skin housetop was heavy for a single canoe, and they divided the common roof into two parts, of which each carried one. While the Yahgan were rovers, they usually stayed regularly in one district, where most of the people were their relatives.

622 554 All observers of the Yahgan comment on their lack of leadership. Medicine-men asserted a certain authority through the fear they inspired, but at times they were roughly handled, as their power was in no wise secure. As no communal enterprises were undertaken, there existed no need for chiefs.